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SUBJECT: SLM/MM ALLEGES JEM MANIPULATED BY GOS

REF: A) KHARTOUM 0075

11. (SBU) Summary: The SLA/MM commanders who defected to JEM last month are in fact government agents who instigated JEM's attack on Minnawi forces in Muhajiriya to sow discord amongst the rival Zaghawa movements at the behest of the government, SLM/MM reps told poloffs in a meeting on January 22. Meanwhile, JEM has instructed its troops to avoid Minnawi positions in South Darfur, but maintains its right to self defense, a JEM spokesman told poloff on January 21. UN sources report that JEM is in putative control of Muhajiria and Labado, but is maintaining a minimal presence inside both towns, preferring instead to congregate on the outskirts of the towns. Meanwhile, fighting apparently broke out in Gereida the morning of January 22 between SAF forces and Masalit rebels formerly loyal to SLM/Minnawi who refused to vacate the town, resulting in four casualties. According to UN sources. The situation in Gereida remains tense and unpredictable. Minnawi himself related JEM efforts to expand its influence and military power in Darfur and throughout Sudan. End Summary.

SLM/MM ALLEGES JEM IS BEING MANIPULATED BY THE GOS

22. (SBU) On January 22 poloffs met with SLM/MM MP Ali Traio, SLM/MM Liaison to SPLM (and brother of Minni) Hussein Arko Minnawi, and SLM Head of Training and Capacity Building Bushara Hassan. Traio immediately lashed out at former SLA/MM Commanders Arko Suleiman Dahia and Bakhit Karima, who defected to JEM last month. He claimed that they had infiltrated JEM on behalf of the GOS ("perhaps Nafie or Ghosh is pulling the strings") and blamed them for instigating the attacks in Muhajiriya. "I don't think Khalil in his right mind would attack our forces," stated Traio. "Arko and Bakhit started this conflict without his permission [at behest of the government]." Traio alleged that the government allowed JEM a free passage through to South Darfur to take Muhajiriya, and that SAF bombings of JEM positions on January 7 were merely a smokescreen in a scheme to sow discord between JEM and SLM/MM.

33. (SBU) Traio continued Dahia and Karima "are obviously still government agents," noting that have always been pro-government and even before to their defection to JEM, had been early proponents of integration of SLM/MM forces into the SAF. He further stated that they have no conceivable ideological reason to join JEM, "but nonetheless they have everyone fooled, even Khalil." When asked how a movement known for its tight-knit leadership and disciplined decision-making could be infiltrated in this way, Traio asserted that Khalil has let his desire to be the sole rebel representative at possible Darfur peace talks in Qatar, as well as his urgent need for new recruits, cloud his judgment. He also pointed to public statements made by former SLM/MM Secretary General Mustafa Tirab on January 21 to "Al-Sahafa" which claim that Dahia and Karima were in fact his commanders and not JEM's as further evidence to the duo's questionable allegiances. (Note: Minnawi suspended Tirab, who has long been accused of working for the NCP, from the movement in

October 2008.) Tirab also reportedly claimed that the announcement of a new SLM branch, SLM/Tirab, would be forthcoming.

14. (SBU) With regard to the situation on the ground, Traio stated control of the villages of Muhajiriya and Labado is fluid because both JEM and SLM/MM forces "are staying mobile, in order to avoid being sitting ducks." He downplayed SLM/MM's handing over of its former stronghold of Gereida to government forces, stating that "Gereida isn't under the control of the SAF per se; they are there to protect infrastructure and water resources." (Note: On January 22, UN sources told emboff that fighting broke out at 09:00 in Gereida between SAF forces occupying Gereida town and Masalit rebels formerly loyal to SLM/Minnawi, resulting in four casualties. While most Zaghawa SLM/MM fighters left Gereida under the orders of Minnawi, pockets of Masalit rebels rejected the decision and stayed, according to the source. They were apparently angered by the arrival of government troops because it impinged on their desire to collect road tolls and other taxes, and clashes resulted. The fighting has subsided but the situation remains tense and unpredictable, according to the sources. End Note.)

JEM INSTRUCTED TO AVOID MINNAWI POSITIONS

15. (SBU) On January 21, JEM's Secretary for Foreign Affairs Bushara Suliman Nour told poloff that JEM leadership has instructed its forces in Darfur to avoid SLM/MM's positions. The Ndjamena-based JEM representative added that "we will avoid Minnawi's troops and do not want to fight with them, but we must do all we can to defend ourselves." Nour claimed that Minnawi's forces started the fight in South Darfur, that SLM/MM is a legitimate target as Minnawi is still a part of the GOS, and that Minnawi's

KHARTOUM 00000084 002 OF 002

allies (specifically naming Abdallah Banda, Bahar Abu Gharda, and Jibril Tek) are "all bandits and JEM will do all it can to stop car jacking and lawlessness in Darfur." Nour stated that he rejects all rumors of secret JEM alliances with the SPLM and the GOS. On another note, Nour said he is optimistic that negotiations with the GOS will begin in the next ten days saying "We are ready to talk with them."

SECURITY UPDATE FROM UNDSS

16. (SBU) UNDSS officer Will Mulders told poloff on January 21 in Nyala that UNAMID had resumed patrols to Muhajiriya on January 20, but a wide swath of eastern South Darfur still remains a no-go zone for UN civilians and INGOs. According to Mulders, JEM is in putative control of Muhajiriya, 70 km east of Nyala, and Labado, 50 km east of Nyala, but is maintaining a minimal presence in both towns, instead preferring to station their technicals and fighters outside of the towns. The withdrawal of 31 workers from the INGO Solidarite went "smoothly," and UNDSS plans to conduct a security assessment on January 26 to determine if INGOs can return to the area. In a brief conversation with UNDSS, JEM fighters stated that JEM conducted the military operation with the assistance of defectors from SLA/MM. Additionally, JEM reportedly told UNDSS that while they intend to hold the territory in order to restore humanitarian and development operations in the area, they reiterated their oft-repeated desire of returning to capture Omdurman.

MINNAWI CALLS FROM THE FIELD

17. (SBU) Calling from El Fasher on January 21 and 22, Minni Minnawi told CDA Fernandez that JEM's goal is to destroy or absorb all the other rebel movements, one by one, and then make a deal with the NCP, at the very least, elevating Khalil Ibrahim to Vice-President of Sudan and the regime's enforcer in Darfur. He said that JEM was trying to woo janjaweed fighters from the Arab Habbaniya tribe to join his movement. Minnawi said that Meidob tribesmen reaching his forces in North Darfur told them that the clash between mutinous Meidob and JEM in Chad in early January "was actually a massacre, with 148 Meidob killed by Khalil." Minni had also spoken with GOSS Presidential Affairs Minister Luka Biong Deng to clarify that he

respected Salva Kiir and the SPLM but that the SPLM team that visited JEM recently "had its own agenda, not the SPLM's, I had relatives in the room when they met with Khalil so I know this for a fact."

18. (SBU) Comment: SLM/MM appears increasingly desperate as it watches its former strongholds disappear from its control, to both JEM and government forces. SLM/MM has yet to muster a coherent response, politically or military, instead continuing to lob accusations in many directions. If the charges against Dahia and Karima are true, however, Minnawi would do well to reach out to Khalil for a rapprochement to avoid any further government treachery. Meanwhile JEM has further asserted itself as the primary rebel movement capable of projecting force in Darfur (and beyond). Like the NCP, from which it sprang and whose exclusionist ideology it shares, it has mastered an effective mix of violence and duplicity, in pursuit of its core interests. These latest moves by JEM may demonstrate that the movement was emboldened by its visit to Washington, but there is a strategic objective in moving powerfully into South Darfur: getting within striking distance of oil infrastructure in South Kordofan and of the Sudanese heartland in the Nile Valley. The government will almost assuredly begin to bomb JEM locations in South Darfur in the coming days. End comment.

FERNANDEZ